

## HONDURAS

The cultural heritage of Honduras dates back to the Mayan empire which lasted until their mysterious disappearance between 800 and 900 A.D. The famous ruins of Copán demonstrate the artistic and scientific accomplishment of the Mayans. After the decline of the mysterious Mayan empire other smaller indigenous empires came to power until the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors.

In 1502 Columbus landed and named the country Honduras (depths) for the deep waters lying off the northern coast. The remaining Indians battled the Spanish until 1539 when the last of the chiefs Lempira, was killed.

During its early history, an indigenous tribe requested a British Invasion. The British occupied a partial area of the country and withdrew in 1859. In September 1821, Honduras declared independence from Spain and briefly joined the Mexican empire. Honduras gained complete independence from Spain and briefly joined the Mexican empire. Honduras gained complete independence in 1838. At the end of the 1800's an instable government led the country to fall under Nicaraguan influence, until the country fell under the military rule of Tiburcio Carías Andino in 1932, ruling until 1981, when elections and civilian rule were once more restored. Although free elections continued, the military continued to exercise much influence in the country and national elections. Carlos Robertas Reina Idiaquez was elected and attempts to attack corruption and promote human rights for Honduras.

### ***The People***

Most of the 7% native population lives in isolated areas such as La Mosquitia. The principal indian ethnic groups include the Miquito, Payas, and Xicaques. The blacks are primarily Garinagu. Also, a group called the Sambos are a mixture of black and Indian inhabitants.

### ***The Government***

The Honduran government is independent and democratic. It is divided into three branches: the executive branch, led by the president, three Vice-Presidents, and a Cabinet of Ministers. The second branch is the legislative branch composed of the National Congress, and lastly is the judicial branch consisting of the courts. Honduras is divided into 18 departments. The president is the head of the government. He serves with a cabinet and serves one four year term. All citizens are required to vote starting at age 18.

### ***Language***

Spanish is the official and dominant language. Some of the Garinagu speak Garífuna, and various other indigenous languages are spoken. English is a required language in secondary school, but few people are fluent.

### ***Religion***

The major religion is Catholicism but other Christian groups are free and protected by law. Protestantism is growing, but Catholicism maintains the strong influence on the culture. Each town has a patron saint for which it holds an annual festival.

### ***La Gastronomía***

The main foods include beans, corn, tortillas, and rice. The common fruits and vegetables are bananas, pineapples, mangoes, citrus fruits, coconuts, melons, avocados, potatoes, and yams. Special dishes include tapado, a stew of beef, vegetables, and coconut milk, mondongo (tripe and beef knuckles), nacatamales (pork tamales) and torrijas (like french toast). During the summer months, they enjoy frozen fruit juices called topogios or charamuscas.